Hurricane Harvey Story Map
Draft Content (9/3/17)

INTRODUCTION

EPA has a very organized and highly developed program for responding to man-made and natural disasters. In advance of Hurricane Harvey, Administrator Scott Pruitt activated our response centers in Washington DC, Dallas and Atlanta, and personnel were prepared and ready to deploy if requested by the states through FEMA. EPA's Region 6 office in Dallas took action to ensure that Superfund Sites were secured, and developed a plan to assist Texas CEQ in rapidly assessing approximately 300 public water systems. Region 6 processed emergency fuel waiver requests, and laid the groundwork for seamlessly integrating emergency response activities with Texas, Louisiana, and other federal response agencies.

Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas Coast as a Category 4 Hurricane on August 25, 2017. An ESF-10 Mission Assignment was signed on August 28, 2017. EPA, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas General Land Office (TGLO) and the US Coast Guard entered into a Unified Command to begin evaluation, clean-up and recovery of spills, releases and orphan containers.

WHAT WE ARE DOING?

Corpus Christi

Unified Command teams deployed to the Corpus Christi Branch are rapidly assessing public water supplies, wastewater treatment plants, and industrial facilities to determine if they are damaged and releasing wastes and hazardous materials into floodwaters. EPA and TCEQ are working to monitor facilities that have reported spills. As of Sept. 2, half of the 4,500 drinking water systems potentially affected by Harvey have been contacted. Of those, 1,514 systems are fully operational, 166 have boil-water notices, and 50 are shut down. Currently, 1,656 of approximately 2,469 wastewater treatment plants are fully operational in the affected counties. Teams are working with system operators to expedite bringing systems back in operation.

Austin

FEMA has located a Joint Field Office (JFO) in Austin where FEMA, EPA, US Coast Guard and other federal, state, local and tribal partners are coordinating response activities, including the release of joint information to the public. At the State Operation Center in Austin, EPA is working with TCEQ to contact industrial sources within the flood impacted area to determine their operational status and find out what support is needed for the start-up of industrial sources along the coastal area of Texas.

Houston

Teams from the Houston Branch performed reconnaissance including 28 hazard evaluations and oil discharge assessments.

WHAT ASSETS ARE WE USING?

ASPECT

ASPECT stands for Airborne Spectral Photometric Environment Collection Technology. The surveillance aircraft flew through the fire at the Arkema chemical plant in Crosby, Texas. The aircraft monitored for airborne toxic chemicals. EPA's ASPECT Program is the nation's only 24/7/365 emergency airborne platform equipped with special chemical, radiological, and situational awareness instruments. It detects chemicals and radiation while collecting aerial photos and videos for situational awareness during an emergency day or night.

TAGA

The Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) is a self-contained mobile laboratory capable of real-time sampling of outdoor air or emissions. The instrumentation refers both to the analytical instrument and the mobile laboratory built around it. This versatile mobile monitoring system offers a wide variety of services to assist EPA with cost-effectively conducting investigatory activities.

The instrumentation aboard a TAGA mobile laboratory includes real-time monitoring and analyzing for many organic and inorganic compounds at the part-per-billion by volume (ppbv) levels or lower. The TAGA has high precision Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) to pinpoint any identified chemicals/gases sampling locations on a map.

PHILIS

Portable High-throughput Integrated Laboratory Identification System (PHILIS) is EPA's mobile laboratory asset for remote or on-site analysis during natural disasters, accidental releases, terrorist and other incident response actions. It was created to address gaps in the Nation's capability and capacity to analyze contaminated environmental samples – soils, waters, surface wipes, and air matrices. PHILIS has the capability to analyze detection limits centered on health-based clearance levels. It is National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accredited & Clean Water Act certified laboratory and part of EPA's Emergency Response Laboratory Network (ERLN).

HOW IS EPA ASSESSING POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO SUPERFUND SITES?

EPA conducted aerial assessments at **41** Superfund sites in areas affected by Hurricane Harvey.
28 – Show no damage

13 – Experienced flooding, two of which have been inspected and determined to require no emergency clean-up. Eleven sites are inaccessible due to flood waters. There are teams ready to inspect them once floodwaters recede. *(Map to allow for linking to each NPL site)*

Arkema Facility, Crosby, TX

At the Arkema chemical plant in Crosby, emergency responders undertook a 24-hour operation to monitor the facility due to fires that erupted on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1. EPA and TCEQ continue to provide direct support to the Crosby Volunteer Fire Department, Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and the Harris County Fire Marshal. There is the threat of more fires at the facility. Focus remains on the safety of those around the facility.

IS EPA TESTING FLOODWATERS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY?

Under the Unified Command, EPA's water quality sampling is focused on industrial facilities and hazardous waste sites. Floodwaters contain many hazards, including bacteria and other contaminants. Precautions should be taken by anyone involved in cleanup activities or any others who may be exposed to flood waters. These precautions include heeding all warnings from local and state authorities regarding safety advisories. In addition to the drowning hazards of wading, swimming, or driving in swift floodwaters, these waters can carry large objects that are not always readily visible that can cause injuries to those in the water. Other potential hazards include downed power lines and possible injuries inflicted by animals displaced by the floodwaters.